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LIFE

OF

GEORGE M. DALLAS,

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.



PREPARED AND PUBLISHED IN SEPTEMBER, 1844, BY THE
DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION,

JOHN K. KINE,
SAMUEL DAVIS,
JOSEPH PUGH,
JOHN HAMILTON, Jr.,
LEWIS ORT, Jr.,
JAMES W. FLETCHER,
BENJAMIN MIFFLIN,
GEORGE P. LEHMAN,

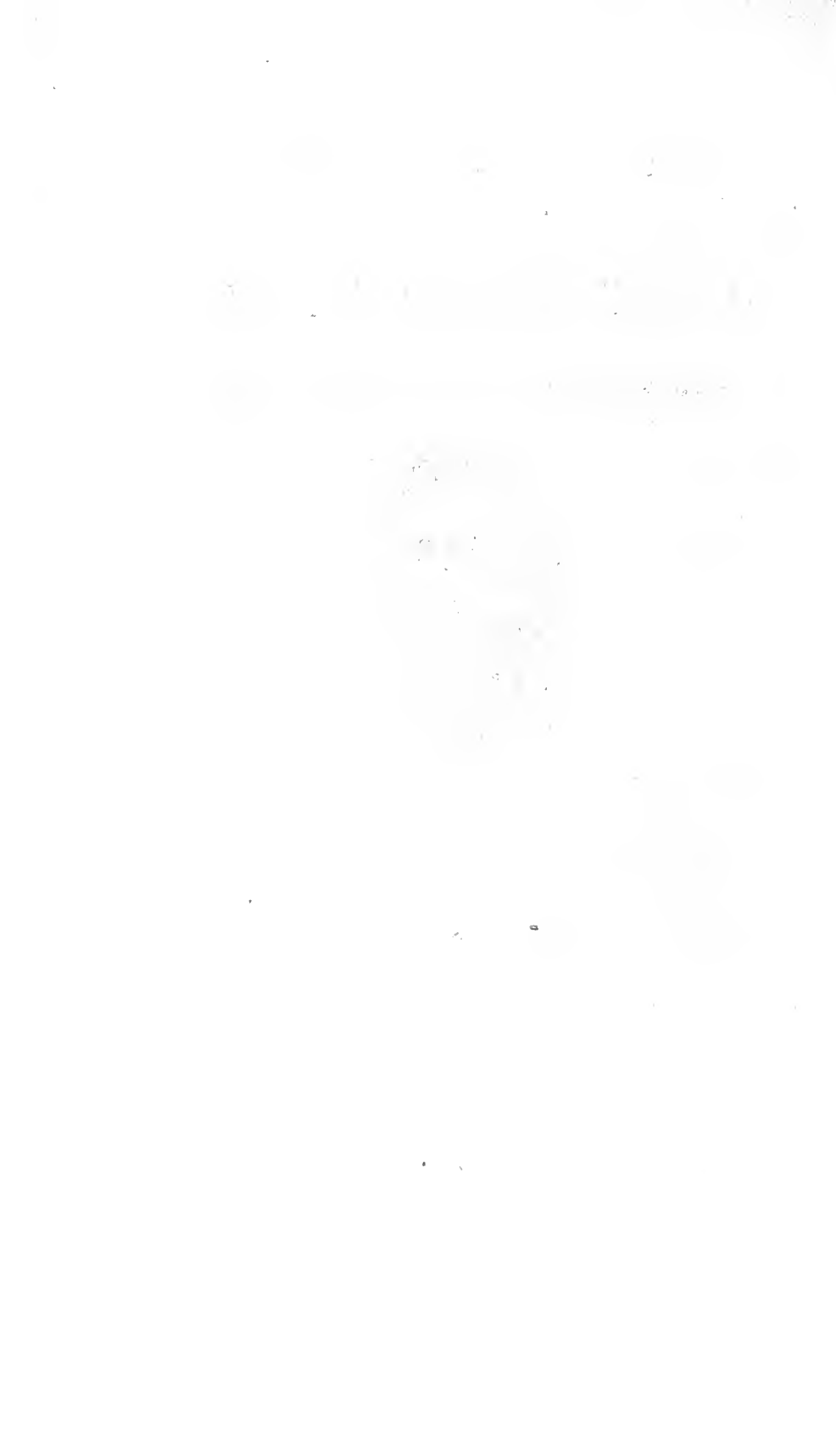
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THOMAS RONEY,
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PATRICK LEVY,
COMMITTEE.

EXTENDED TO THE PRESENT TIME, AND REPRINTED NOV. 1847.

PHILADELPHIA:

TIMES AND KEYSTONE JOB OFFICE, NO. 32 SOUTH THIRD STREET.

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Revised Edition

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GEORGE M. DALLAS,

The nominee of the Democratic Convention for the Vice Presidency of the United States, was born in the city of Philadelphia, on the 10th day of July, 1792. He is the youngest son of Alexander James Dallas, one of the most accomplished advocates and distinguished statesmen that have adorned the legal profession of the United States, or sustained in important posts of public trust the principles and policy of the Republican party.* His early education was conducted by Mr. Ely and Mr. Robert Andrews, of Philadelphia, both of whom have survived to witness the merited distinction of their pupil. At the age of fourteen, he was entered in Princeton College, and continued there until 1810, when he graduated with the highest honors of his class. He delivered their valedictory address, which is still remembered and adverted to in the college history as a striking example of feeling, eloquence and taste. Indeed, as a public speaker, he gave early promise of that excellence which has since been displayed in many of the prominent situations to which his talents have elevated him; and a published oration, delivered when he was but seventeen years of age, and preserved in the *Port Folio*, strikingly attests the maturity of his powers.

On leaving college, Mr. Dallas commenced the study of the law, in the office of his father, at Philadelphia; and although, in the interval of that severe study, the more attractive forms of literature and poetry were not unfrequently cultivated, he yet persevered with unceasing application in making himself a thorough master of the great principles of the profession of which he has been so distinguished a member. He was admitted to the bar in 1813. Soon after the declaration of war with England, he had enrolled himself in a volunteer corps; but when, in the year 1813, Mr. Gallatin was appointed by President Madison, a member of the commission that repaired to St. Petersburg, for the purpose of negotiating a peace under the mediation of the Emperor Alexander, he accompanied that minister as his private and confidential secretary. During a resi-

* Mr. Dallas derived his baptismal name of Millin from his godfather, Governor Millin, under whom his father had been appointed to the office of Secretary of the Commonwealth some months before.

dence of more than a year in Europe, Mr. Dallas had an opportunity of visiting Russia, France, England, Holland, and the Netherlands, and of cultivating the society and friendship of some of the most eminent jurists and memorable statesmen of the age. He returned to the United States in August 1814, bearing the despatches from the American commissioners then holding their session at Ghent, which announced the prospects little favorable to a speedy peace, that are known to have resulted from the earlier conferences with the British envoys. On his arrival he found his father transferred from the bar of Philadelphia to the head of the Treasury Department.

No one who was then upon the stage of action will ever forget the circumstances under which this appointment of the elder Mr. Dallas was made. It was in the darkest period of our history, immediately after the sacking of Washington, when treason was holding its convocations at noonday, when the credit of the country was annihilated, its flag trampled on, and all but hope and honor seemed buried under the ashes of the capitol. Called unexpectedly to a post, from which the most distinguished financier of the time had retired in dismay, it was the office of Mr. Dallas to rally the pride and renovate the patriotic energies of the nation, to explore and marshal its resources, and to convince the American people that their means were as adequate to the conflict as the conflict was just. Most gallantly indeed did he redeem the pledges that were implied in his acceptance of this perilous office. His spirit-stirring "exposition of the causes and character of the war" is among the most noble documents ever addressed by a fearless officer to a free people. Its effect was electric, and the call which it vindicated for a broad and well digested system of direct taxation was responded to by the Republican party as with the voice of one man. The public faith was redeemed from that hour.

Mr. Dallas remained with his father for a time at Washington, to assist him in the arduous duties of the Treasury, and then returned to Philadelphia, to resume, or rather to commence, the actual practice of his profession—an event that was almost immediately followed by his marriage with an accomplished lady, the daughter of Mr. Nicklin, an eminent merchant of that city.

The death of his father, which occurred shortly after he retired from the administration of the Treasury Department, took from Mr. Dallas, in the outset of his career at the bar, not merely the benefit of professional assistance seldom equalled, but those kind and endearing associations which could have grown up only in intercourse with one whose genius was not more brilliant than his affections were warm. Self-dependent, however, he applied himself with the more ardor to the practice of the

law ; and being appointed, in 1817, the deputy of the Attorney General in the city of Philadelphia, he soon gave evidence of that skill in conducting criminal cases which has since always distinguished his occasional attention to that branch of his profession. When, in the following year, charges were introduced into the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, against Governor Findlay, which resulted in a legislative investigation, Mr. Dallas acted as his counsel ; and the firmness and ability which he displayed throughout the whole proceeding, placed him at once, by general consent, in a rank in his profession that has seldom been attained by so young an advocate.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the exigencies of a legal life could not withdraw Mr. Dallas from the deepest interest in political topics. Deriving from the conduct and counsels of his father, and from the associations of his earliest youth, as well as those of later days, a strong attachment to the principles and views of the Democratic party, he had never failed to co-operate with his fellow-citizens in the measures which were calculated to advance them. The more tranquil administration of Mr. Monroe, succeeding to the fierce political conflicts which existed during the war with England, did not present many questions that rallied party controversies on national affairs ; but the election of Governor Heister in Pennsylvania had brought the Federal party into power in that State, after a long period of Democratic ascendancy, and no one embarked with more zeal than Mr. Dallas in endeavoring to effect the restoration of the policy which he believed to be essential to a sound and just administration of the affairs of the Commonwealth. These efforts resulted in the triumphant election of Governor Shulze, the candidate of the Democratic party.

But while unanimity, followed by success, thus attended the course of his political associates in the State, the elements of division among the Democracy of the Union began to be apparent in regard to the individual who was to succeed Mr. Monroe. Early personal associations, as well as just appreciation of his distinguished talents, had led Mr. Dallas to unite with a large portion of his political friends in Pennsylvania, in a desire that the vote of the State should be given to Mr. Calhoun ; and the success with which that statesman had conducted the administration of the War Department for the eight previous years seemed to give a certain pledge, notwithstanding his comparative youth, of the ability he would display in any Executive office to which the voice of his countrymen should call him. When, however, the general sentiment of the Republican party throughout the Union expressed a desire to confer it on the venerable patriot who had so long and so faithfully maintained their

principles in various posts of civil trust, and so brilliantly augmented the glory of his country in the field of battle, Mr. Dallas, with sentiments towards Gen. Jackson in which the friends of Mr. Calhoun in Pennsylvania at once participated, took the lead in suggesting that the younger candidate should be presented to the American people for the second office, while the united and harmonious voice of the Democratic party should name Gen. Jackson for the Presidential chair. In every measure that resulted from this determination, Mr. Dallas bore a prominent part; the eloquent address in which the Democratic Convention of the State presented their reasons for the course they had adopted, is generally understood to have proceeded from his pen; and when, in November, 1824, the unusually large majority of more than thirty thousand Democratic votes showed the enthusiastic feeling of the people of the State, there were few among them whose zeal had been more honorably and actively displayed than his in producing that gratifying result.

The nefarious compact, in which Mr. Clay figured so largely, having wrested the Presidency from General Jackson, the succeeding four years only contributed to create the yet stronger concentration of public opinion in his favor; and when he obtained, in 1828, the suffrages of fifteen States, the majority in Pennsylvania had increased beyond fifty thousand. It was during this interval that Mr. Dallas received from the people of his native city an honorable mark of their confidence, by an election to the Mayoralty; an office which for many years past has, in consequence of the usual ascendancy of the Federal party, been seldom bestowed upon a person of his political opinions. On the election of General Jackson, he was selected by him as the chief representative of the Executive Government of the Union, in the same city, being appointed to the office of District Attorney of the United States. To the same post his father had been appointed by Mr. Jefferson, through the whole of whose administration he continued to fill it; and from that office Mr. Madison called him to the head of the Treasury. His son occupied the post for a much shorter period; but in the two years during which he discharged its duties, several cases of public interest and considerable magnitude gave full scope to his abilities, and contributed their share to his reputation as a professional man, which each year continued to augment.

At length, in the year 1831, a vacancy having occurred in the representation from Pennsylvania in the Senate of the United States, the Legislature selected Mr. Dallas to fill that honorable post. Thus, in entering for the first time a legislative body, he found himself in the highest and most important assembly that exists under the provisions of the American Constitution. A new field was given to his talents as a statesman and an

orator. Having at the bar of Philadelphia few equals in forensic eloquence, and being perhaps without a rival, certainly without a superior at home, on any occasion of public and especially political discussion, he was now required to match himself with men trained by exercise, as well as possessed of distinguished ability, in a scene which forbade the logical precision of a court, and yet could scarcely call forth or permit the animated current of spontaneous declamation, so often successfully indulged in the lesser assemblages of his fellow-citizens. His speeches in the Senate of the United States, throughout the period that he remained there, were heard with attention that gave evidence of his complete success. Those that have been more carefully reported, display, on a variety of topics, striking political views; and they abound with passages of animated eloquence.

The charter of the Bank of the United States, which had been granted in 1718, was about to expire. The officers of that institution solicited Mr. Dallas to present its claims for a renewal; and the repeated instructions which the Legislature of Pennsylvania had addressed to him on the subject, left him without discretion as to his senatorial course. He presented the memorial of the Bank, frankly avowing his disinclination to the office of its advocate, and protesting a determination to submit its conduct to the most careful scrutiny. It is well remembered in Philadelphia, with how little favor his speech on this occasion was received by the banking directors of Chestnut street. The amendments which he grafted on their project, and the jealously republican spirit with which he proposed to divest it of all possible influence upon the politics of the country, were equally the subject of obnoxious criticism. It was the day of moneyed pride and corporate control, which brooked no limitation, and was insulted by a doubt. The less dignified considerations which so naturally stimulated their distaste to supervision, had not yet been developed.

Like most of the Democratic statesmen of Pennsylvania, Mr. Dallas had not then adopted the opinion which he has since asserted so frequently and with so much force, that such an incorporation is not warranted by the Constitution. His doubts regarded rather the manner in which the affairs of the bank had been conducted with reference to the public interests, and its controverted interference in popular elections. But circumstances soon transpired, which changed his doubts to conviction, and Mr. Dallas found himself in the first rank among the uncompromising opponents of that corrupt and corrupting monopoly. His recent letter to Mr. Wentworth declares his abiding sentiment on the question of a National Bank. His letter to a committee at Smithfield, in 1836, had already ex-

pressed it with epigrammatic brevity: "*The people of America can never again incur the risk of a National Bank.*"

Another most interesting subject of general discussion made the winters of 1832 and 1833 more memorable in our legislative history than any period since the war with England. The principles on which a revision of the tariff of duties was to be made, gave rise, in the former session, to warm and long debates, which, in the following one, led to those that involved the serious question of a right of one or more of the States to nullify a law making such revision on principles that it might regard as contrary to the provisions of the Constitution. On both occasions, Mr. Dallas took part in these debates. On the former, after an eloquent picture of the situation and resources of the United States, he touched with a powerful, but friendly spirit, the various causes to which, independently of the policy of protection generally advocated by the Northern statesman, might be imputed the distresses that were supposed peculiarly to afflict and injure the agriculture of the South. Following then the course of general opinion, as well as the declared policy of Pennsylvania, evinced by the repeated instructions of her Legislature, he presented, in a manner not often surpassed in force and clearness by those who have treated the matter in the same light, the views then entertained on the best mode of adjusting the delicate question, so as to save the South from any real injury, and preserve from destruction the labor and pursuits of the Northern and Middle States. When the heightened excitement of the following year produced that gloomy epoch in our fraternal annals, which was marked by serious discussions on the extent of force that the General Government might exert upon the opposing laws of the States, and the consequent action of her authorities and people, he sustained that power in the Union which he believed to be essential to its preservation, and warranted by the spirit and terms of the contract; but deprecated, in so doing, every measure not clearly necessary for those objects. On all questions appearing to involve any differences of policy or interest among the States, Mr. Dallas appears uniformly to have leaned to that course which he deemed most calculated, even at some sacrifice, to preserve the harmony of the whole.

On the much vexed question of the Tariff, his opinions coincide with those uniformly expressed by General Jackson, and which some of the recent letters of Mr. Clay, if uncontradicted by others, would imply that he also had adopted. But, unlike the candidate of the Whigs, his principles do not vary with the latitude; he has but a single set of them. He regards the Tariff as an administrative measure, to be regulated by the

revenue wants of the General Government, by a scrupulous care to avoid all injustice to any section of the country, and by a patriotic determination to maintain the practical independence of the people, as to all articles necessary to defence or safety. He is neither for a *horizontal* Tariff, as that system has been termed, by which necessity and luxury, the salt of the poor man and the tokay of the princely, are required to bear equal burthens; nor for a Tariff merely protective, which dispenses wealth by law to certain interests, at the expense of all the rest. His would be a Tariff essentially for revenue, incidentally for protection; such a Tariff as was enacted by the framers of our Constitution, in the first year of the government, and under which our whole country was prosperous and all our people contented.

On the 3d of March, 1833, the term expired for which he had been elected to the Senate. At his own request, his name was withheld from the Legislature as a candidate for re-election. He was desirous to return to the bar, from which such an occupation necessarily withdrew him: and his doing so was speedily followed by his appointment to an office, whose duties, while not unconnected with politics, were far more in accordance with his professional pursuits. He was selected by Governor Wolf as the Attorney General of his native State, and he continued to hold it with increasing reputation, and with a degree of approbation and confidence on the part of the whole community, never exceeded, nor often equalled, until the change in the executive administration of the State, by the election of Gov. Ritner, of course induced him to withdraw.

Mr. Dallas had scarcely retired to private life, when he was made the object of one of the most remarkable proceedings that have ever characterized the political course of the party opposed to Democratic principles, during any of the intervals of their temporary ascendancy. Under the pretext of inquiring into the character and acts of secret associations, several of the leading members of the Republican party were summoned to Harrisburg in the middle of the winter, and in defiance of the positive provisions of the constitution of the State, a right was assumed by a committee of the Legislature to investigate their private and social conduct as members of Masonic societies. Of the persons subjected to this strange inquisition, Mr. Dallas was one. He obeyed the summons issued under the apparent sanction of the House of Representatives, and appeared before the committee; but when asked to take the oath by which he was required virtually to acknowledge the right of instituting an inquisition so unheard of, into the private and harmless conduct of himself and his associates, he refused, in a short but most impressive address, and displayed, in terms that led to the abortive termination of the disreputable

affair, its injustice, illegality, and folly. His manly and decided course on this occasion gained for him the grateful acknowledgements of many who, though opposed to him in the ordinary contests of party, yet appreciated as he did the sanctity of social intercourse and domestic privacy. While he was at Boston in 1837, about to embark for Russia, his conduct before the committee of inquisitors was commemorated by a splendid entertainment, in which the most distinguished citizens of all parties united.

During his detention at the seat of the State Government, he perceived the secret operations that soon ripened to so fatal a result, by which the Bank of the United States was imposed, by corrupt and dishonest means, on the people of the United States, and especially of Pennsylvania, as a State institution. He lent the aid of his influence and talents to resist it while he remained at Harrisburg, and on his return to Philadelphia awakened his Democratic brethren, in public discussions, to a full sense of the danger whose near approach had been carefully concealed. The history of that disastrous measure, and the means by which its success was achieved, if not yet developed in all their details, are yet generally known. In consequence of it, the State was plunged into the long train of disasters from which its citizens have not yet been able to extricate themselves, and of which the effects, extending far beyond their immediate objects, have produced the most deplorable results on the business, prosperity, and even character of the American people. Even after the shackles had been fixed, Mr. Dallas was among those who sought to relieve the community from so fatal a thralldom. Taking advantage of the approaching Convention, when the people of the State were to meet with every attribute of original sovereignty not restrained by the Constitution of the United States, and of which the assemblage was promulgated by the vote of the people before the act in question was passed, he called to the consideration of the State, in an able and eloquent letter, the propriety of examining in the frauds that had been perpetrated, and relieving the commonwealth, by an edict of that body, from all fraudulent invasions of its rights, due care being taken to protect and indemnify individuals concerned in the institution from any pecuniary loss.

The political history of the following winter was marked by the election of Mr. Van Buren to the Presidency: and one of the earliest of his acts was to offer to Mr. Dallas the post of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Russia. In that country he remained till October 1839. The only portion of his official correspondence, while there, that has been made public, is his discussion with Count Nesselrode, relative to the territories and commercial intercourse of the two nations on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. It develops several points connected with the rights of

the respective governments on those shores, presented with great clearness and interest, and destined, no doubt, at a day not very distant, to become subjects of still more general and minute examination. The claims and rights of the Americans are sustained with great ability and power.

In the same spirit which watched so carefully the proceedings of Russia on the north-west coast, he urged upon our government at home the indispensable duty of asserting their rights in the Oregon territory, and pointed out the insidious means by which that great question was sought to be complicated. Indeed, on this topic, as well as that of Texas, Mr. Dallas has been far in advance of his party friends. It is more than five years since his warning voice was raised against the encroachments of England on the west, and he was among the very first of our statesmen to vindicate the policy and justice of guarding against her approaches on the south by re-annexing Texas to the Union. His eloquent letter on this subject to a committee at Pittsburg, was written at the close of the last year.

To those objects of inquiry, which in such a country as Russia, would naturally attract an intelligent mind, Mr. Dallas devoted great attention. Into its history, and a study of the habits, manners and character of its people, he plunged with a natural enthusiasm, and collected a variety of facts tending to elucidate all these subjects. In a public address, delivered not long after his return to the United States, he sketched with a vivid and brilliant pen several of these topics; but it is to be hoped that a work of a more extensive kind may be hereafter given to the public. It is one which is rendered peculiarly interesting, from the nature of the friendly relations that have existed, and that circumstances will probably long preserve. He remarked with great truth, in the address referred to, that "such, for more than half a century, has been the strangeness and perversity of other international pretensions, that this republic and that despotism, though widely separated, recognized the wisdom of closely cementing their mutual amity. The freedom of the seas, the rights of neutrality, *the searchless shelter of the flag*, were early links of sympathy and confidence which the forecast of Mr. Jefferson strove to rivet. To these ties are since added others, springing mainly from a common consciousness that, while there can seldom if ever be points of enmity, their geographical relation on opposite flanks of rival and ambitious powers, gives to their declared friendship a vast efficiency in discouraging assaults or encroachments upon their own security, pursuits and independence. It is but a reasonable curiosity which seeks to understand a nation, more likely than any other to be the permanent and pacific ally of the United States."

Since Mr. Dallas' return from Russia, he has devoted himself exclusively to the practice of his profession; and though it is generally understood that not long after that event, a seat in his cabinet was tendered to him by Mr. Van Buren, he has, so far, adhered to his determination to remain in private life. "That he will be long permitted to do so," says his eloquent and almost prophetic biographer in the *Democratic Review*, of whose production this is little else than a summary, "we cannot think, unless he shall strenuously resist the wishes and the judgment of his fellow citizens. To the confidence reposed in him, founded in his adherence from earliest youth to the accepted doctrines of the republican party on every great national question, he adds a brilliancy of genius, a spotless personal life, and qualities so calculated to win the affections and regard of all with whom he is called into association, that his native State, placing him as she does in the highest class of her favorite sons, will scarcely consent that the riper years of his life shall be withdrawn altogether from her service, and that of the people of the United States. Adorning and filling, as he would with eminent distinction, the most exalted offices that his fellow-citizens can bestow, their hope is certainly as general as it is reasonable and just, that none of the accidents which hang upon all human foot-steps may withhold him from the honorable discharge of those public trusts, which are conferred by the willing suffrages of a free people upon those among them who have been found to be the most deserving."

In personal appearance and deportment, few men blend more simplicity and dignity; and as a public speaker, his manner is singularly prepossessing. Though not hasty or unusually rapid, his lively imagination and success in happy illustration give to his speeches, even when least premeditated, an attractive variety, aptness and ease, and make him one of the most fortunate of orators in occasional addresses to popular bodies, as he has been one of the most successful in scenes requiring the highest talents for debate. To letters he is known to have always been as much devoted as the occupation of an otherwise active life would permit. His numerous political papers give evidence of an excellent style; and it is not many years since his occasional contributions in the various branches of elegant literature were to be found in the publications of the day.

These are indeed the ornaments and coloring, rather than the fibre of a statesman's character. But they grace it, without impairing its strength. A quick penetration, a calm judgment, a clear analytical mind richly improved by the study of the world as well as books, generosity of temperament, warmth in friendships, and that universal yet dignified courtesy which resolves itself into conscious equality with the humblest and the most powerful alike—these are more essential traits in the portraiture of

republican greatness ; and all who know Mr. Dallas will at once recognize them as his own.

Such has been the life, and such is the character of him, whom the Democracy of Pennsylvania submits with pride to her sisters of the Union as her first recognized candidate for the Executive Magistracy. It is not to disparage any other of the eminent men whom her suffrages have honored, to affirm that no one of her statesmen has ever maintained a purer or more elevated walk of life, been more beloved by those around him, and respected every where, or been more richly commended to the favor of his country by his patriotism, his services, and his capacity for enlarged usefulness, than GEORGE M. DALLAS.

It is among the trophies of our Democracy that the pledges and prophecies which were embodied three years ago in the succinct narrative which is now re-published, have been so abundantly fulfilled by the after career of this illustrious statesman.

A triumphant majority of the "willing suffrages of a free people" called him to one of the *most exalted offices in their gift*, and to a *public trust*, which by the fortune of human events involved the fate of measures essential to the prosperity of the Union and the safety of the principles on which it rests. Under what circumstances of trial and difficulty, yet how gallantly and how triumphantly he has fulfilled this trust, is fresh in the memory of a grateful country.

Mr. Dallas took his oath of office as Vice President on the 4th of March, 1845. In his letters at the time of accepting the nomination of the united Democracy, he had pledged his emphatic support to four measures of policy : the introduction of Texas into the number of the United States ; the extension of our laws over the territory of Oregon ; the separation of the moneys of the people from those of individual or chartered capitalists ; and such an adjustment of the Tariff of duties on imports, as withdrawing from the pockets of the people for the uses of the government no more moneys than the necessities of an economical Administration might require, should leave every branch of domestic industry under the equal protection of the law, and open to the competition of all.

Immediately after Mr. Dallas took his seat in the chair of the President of the Senate, the floor of that body became the brilliant and perilous arena in which these momentous questions were discussed by their most distinguished champions. Texas had been annexed by one of the closing efforts of Mr. Tyler's administration ; but the responsibilities of ad-

mitting her into the family of the States were grievously increased by the hostile attitude which Mexico assumed, and by the intrigues of the great crowned powers of Western Europe.

The Oregon question at the same moment threatened to involve us in war with England, that ancient and proud people, from which we have derived our own institutions of civil freedom, but which has not yet forgiven us for crowning them by the assertion of our political independence. In our negotiation with England, we maintained that the whole territory south of $54^{\circ} 40'$ was part and parcel of the United States; and one of the most powerful letters of the Secretary of State, Mr. Buchanan, conclusively established the rightfulness of this claim, and the apparent impossibility of yielding it.

The proceedings of the Senate, while acting upon treaties made by the Executive, are conducted with closed doors; but enough is known of the frankly declared and firmly defended opinions of Mr. Dallas, to justify the record in this place, that when others yielded to the pressure of circumstances, he remained fearless and firm in the attitude he had from the first assumed on this thrilling subject. If, as the more recent observations give reason to apprehend, the Oregon Treaty has left to us little more than a barren remnant of our ancient western frontier, he was not a party to the surrender.

The Sub-Treasury, or its antagonist schemes of a National Bank and a hydra-headed combination of the State Banks, was the next great topic upon which parties divided. It is well to recall the fact as an item of history. It has now no other interest; for there is no statesman and scarcely any voter, who, after testing the results of the Sub-Treasury system, would dream of returning to the follies which preceded it. Mr. Dallas, by his influence and his counsel, contributed largely to the adoption of the Independent Treasury.

The Tariff subject—from the intricacy of its details; the vast pecuniary interests which it affected or was supposed to affect; the monopolies, grown rich and powerful under the law of '42, which adopting the approved definition of a competence, "a little more than a man hath in possession," now exacted that their gains should be perpetuated; and the excited feeling of those, whom the same legislation had impoverished, and who naturally struggled to be released from it; from all these causes the Tariff question was compassed about by difficulty, and scarcely susceptible of temperate discussion. Our own Legislature too, looking to the question with feelings which in the legislators of a State might well be pardoned for their exclusiveness of character, had instructed its Senators in advance to vote against every change. The act of 1846 came to the Senate, with all that bold simplicity and manliness of character stamped upon it, which characterize the productions of Robert J Walker's

mind. The Senate, after a lengthened and fierce debate, was so nearly divided that it was in the power of one man, by dodging the vote, to throw all the responsibility of action upon the shoulders of the Vice President. A contemptible intrigue, scarcely worthy of some of those into whose counsels it was admitted, prevailed on one wretched Senator to withdraw behind the bar of the Senate chamber. His absence made the vote a tie. The ayes stood 27 ; the noes, also 27. Mr. Dallas rose, and in a speech of unequalled dignity and force, declared the conclusions to which his judgment had led him. Quoting the Constitution, he remarked upon the interpretation of the Tariff-making power which had been approved by a majority of the States. He then alluded, in contrast, to the wishes of his own State, to which, during his career as its representative, he had more than once deferred, and spoke with deep feeling of his sympathies with the individual interests which might be jeopardized by his course. But, adverting to his position as Vice President of all the States, he added with resolution, that "the fact that the bill before him dealt with some of the pursuits and resources of his native Commonwealth less kindly than she might well have expected, did not relieve him from his duty, but only made its performance personally reluctant and painful."

He gave the Casting Vote! His friends who stood round him in the gallery of the chamber, and his enemies too, wondered at the placid grace with which he bore himself in this stern trial of his patriotic firmness. So far as partizan foresight could see, he was sealing the doom of his political hopes. "How beautifully he pronounces his death warrant!" was the exclamation of an eminent Pennsylvanian, as Mr. Dallas reached the closing words of his address: "If by thus acting, it be my misfortune to offend any portion of those who honored me with their suffrages, I have only to say to them, and to my whole country, that *I prefer the deepest obscurity of private life, with an unwounded conscience, to the glare of official eminence, spotted by a sense of moral delinquency.*"

The exasperation of the monopolist party at this vote was such as to remind one of the days of Jackson's veto of the Bank Charter. It showed itself in all those forms of dignified rebuke, which the lords of the yardstick and the spinning-jenny delight to indulge in. Their hireling newspapers compared him to Judas and Arnold ; the petty orators of the Clay Club grew magnificent as they denounced a patriotism too exalted for their comprehension ; and Market Street and Front Street, though not quite yet recovered from the memory of the bets they had lost at the last election, added a per centage to the party funds of Whiggery, to pay the charges of burning him in effigy, and insulting the ladies of his family by placards upon his door.

Sixteen months ago ! The time seems short for the vindication of a

statesman's fame, and the developement of national gratitude. But it has been long enough. Is there any one now to complain of the casting vote, or to sigh for a restoration of the Tariff of '42? Who now talks of denouncing Mr. Dallas, of crushing him with the weight of popular indignation, of hanging him as high as Haman on the trees of Independence Square? Where now is that affiliated band of shop-boy heroes, which stood pledged in August, 1846, to escort him into town with the music of the Rogue's March? Truly, these things were, and we in Philadelphia witnessed them. But how wonderful has been the change!

The manufacturer and the miner have gone on redoubling their profits; the industry and skill of the mechanic, freed from the restraints of miscalled protection, are more independent and more productive than before—the merchant wonders at the prosperous returns of emancipated commerce—and the farmer, whistling as he turns the furrow, finds the whole world opened to him for his market, and himself at liberty to buy where he can buy cheapest, and to sell where he can get the best price.

And is it wonderful, that public feeling now turns gratefully to the man, by whose *casting vote* these things have been brought about; the man who dared to be honest, when honesty and policy seemed for the time to have shaken hands and parted; the man who, when wise men doubted and brave men faltered, saw his duty clear and performed it fearlessly; the man, who raised up as the representative of *all the States*, looked upon all of them as his constituents alike; and when sworn to protect the Constitution, planted himself in front of it, to turn away (if it might be so,) the shafts that endangered it, or receive them in his bosom?

We have many brave sons here in Pennsylvania, who when the country calls on them to suffer or to die, are not backward to offer themselves up; we have fathers among us who, emulating the patriarch, have gone forth with their first-born to the field of heroic sacrifice; and mothers too, whose better than Spartan spirit brightens up the homestead hearth with the perpetual altar fire of their own patriotism. These are people, with whom conscientious responsibility is a familiar spirit; who used to duty in whatever shape it may come, whether of patient endurance or energetic trial, can value true virtue in another. And these measured justly the official devotion of Mr. Dallas, when, hemmed round by exasperated opponents, and by hesitating politicians of his own party, he gave his vote for the country. Truly said Mr. Van Buren, "The people will never be faithless to any man, who never was false to them."

Yet it is not only in reference to the past, nor even the present, that Mr. Dallas' casting vote is so full of interest. At the time he gave it, it exemplified well his uniform fidelity to his pledges and to principle; and now, while our country is rejoicing in the fruits of his integrity and firmness, it explains the grateful feeling with which all regard him. But

we are men, and the future is before us; a rapidly advancing future, in which the dignity, the fame, the honor of our country must of necessity be involved. Within the next Presidential term, national rights are to be adjusted of more serious import than any which have been discussed since the war with England, and domestic questions of deep and anxious constitutional interest! Who is the man, to whose firm grip we shall entrust the flag of our national honor? Who shall have charge of the Ark of the Constitution?

We know what these questions are; and we know from the veteran party leader of the Whigs, how that party is disposed to deal with them. We know too that by a series of accidents, a Whig majority has found its way into the House of Representatives, and that the Senate is now for all practical purposes a divided body. It is to the President, as in the times of General Jackson, that we of the Democratic faith must now look for our only certain hope.

What are the questions?

The war with Mexico, triumphant every where, has transferred to our possession the capital, the sea-ports, the fortresses, the territory and the treasure of that nation. Yet peace and indemnity, the only objects for which we have fought, seem as far off as ever: the Military, who have till now ruled that ill-fated country with a rod of steel, are prisoners or fugitives, and not even the form of a government remains for us to negotiate with. What are we to do? The simple and straight-forward answer would seem to be, that we should either hold on to all that we have got till we are made whole for what justice has cost us; or that we should compensate ourselves at once, by now annexing to our territory and by degrees including within the circle of our institutions a portion of the Mexican domain.

To the latter course, the shortest as it seems to us, the most natural, the most in accordance with the spirit of our country, which recognizes self-government as the right of all mankind, and looks on the people of the United States as the missionaries of advancing freedom—to this course, so just, so *beneficent*, harmonizing so well with the destinies and duties of the great Republic, a patriotic and highly intelligent body of our countrymen interpose a preliminary question. Freemen themselves, in spirit and by inheritance, and unwilling to permit the extension of slavery to regions in which it is not now tolerated, they would have Congress declare beforehand that there shall never be slaves on the soil which we obtain from Mexico. Others equally fervent with these, protest that this is a household subject, and excluded by the terms of the Constitution from the sphere of Federal legislation—that while the President and Congress have charge of the foreign relations of all the States, making war, regulating commerce and collecting duties on imports for national objects, the Constitu-

tion has expressly reserved to the people of each State the right of determining for themselves upon all other matters of legislation whatsoever ; that in our free and equal confederacy, there can be no inequality of rights between the States of which it is made up ; that Louisiana and Missouri have just the same powers within their own borders as Massachusetts and New York ; and they add, that if California or New Mexico shall hereafter be adjoined to the Union, it will be for the people of those States, as it is now for the people of Pennsylvania and Virginia, to decide the question of slavery for themselves.

A third set are for splitting the difference, dividing the proposed new States that are to come to us from Mexico into two somewhat unequal portions, and leaving to those in one portion a full share of constitutional rights, but denying it to the rest. This is called the Missouri compromise ; according to which when carried out fully, the man whose house stands on the dividing line of $36^{\circ} 30'$ may hold slaves in one half of it, but not in the other. This is the scheme which the Secretary of State, Mr. Buchanan, opposed so strenuously in 1818, but which more mature reflection and perhaps a change of circumstances have combined to make him favor at the present time.

They are difficult questions perhaps ; but Mr. Clay has found a short way of solving them. In his great speech at Lexington, Kentucky, on the 13th of November, he has cut the knot. He has found out, "most fervent idolater of truth," that when Mexico had declared war in form and had already invaded our soil, then for Congress to recognize the existence of the war by the act of Mexico, was to stamp on our statute book "a palpable falsehood ;" that ours "is no war of defence, but one of unnecessary and of offensive aggression," "continued blindly without any visible object, or any prospect of definite termination." He acknowledges indeed that Mexico owes us large sums of money ; but then she has fought us, he says, till she has become too poor to pay, except in land, and *this she will not give, and we ought not to take*. He would therefore make peace at once if the Mexicans will only be persuaded to permit us, pull down our flag from the National Palace and Chapultepec and Puebla and Monterey, dig up our dead from the fields which their valour has consecrated, and come home, without indemnity for the past or guarantee for the future, a shame to ourselves and the laughing-stock of the world. Truly, this is a short way of settling the question, whether Congress shall legislate for Mexican territory ! and in all respects characteristic of the party from which it comes.

Such, thank Heaven, are not our Pennsylvania notions either of patriotism or moral duty. Hear how nobly Mr. Dallas marks the contrast in a recent speech :

"Under any circumstances, war is a calamity, to be avoided whenever

it can be avoided consistently with safety and honor. It demoralizes society, breaks into the domestic relations and private pursuits of life, inspires unchristian passions, and eats out the natural and regular resources of government. It is especially hostile in its tendency to republican and simple institutions and habits. Still, this calamity must sometimes be encountered. With all its evils; it is a hundred fold better than national dishonor. However bitter and poisonous it may be, it is purifying nectar compared to the loathsome and noxious drug of cowardly disgrace. Our war was forced upon us by a presumptuous, perfidious, and invading neighbor; it is, on our side, a just and righteous contest to protect our soil, the lives and property of our citizens, the security and union of the States. Commensurate with the justice of our cause has been the victorious progress of our arms: until, at last, defeating our enemy at the very walls of his capital, we may expect from the instinct of self-preservation the indemnities we have a right to exact, and the honorable peace for which we have fought.

Let but an honorable peace close this brilliant war, and none will regret the treasure expended in its prosecution. Let but our gallant soldiers return to their homes, their "brows bound with victorious wreaths," and bearing in their hands the emblems of a conquered peace, and who will count the cost."

Hear him too on the great constitutional question, which Mr. Clay would be content to dodge, by sacrificing all the objects of the war, all its gains, and all the glory it has won for us. Replying to the eloquent welcome addressed to him by the Hon. George R. Macfarlane, on behalf of the citizens of Blair county, Mr. Dallas said:

"It is said, sir, that this yet unfinished foreign war is *not* the only speck upon our national horizon:—that our domestic tranquility is shadowed by a dark and threatening cloud, rapidly rising and spreading; and that the bolt is forging, if not launching, which, aimed at the domestic institutions and equal rights of our Southern sister States, must penetrate the mere parchment of our Constitution and shake the confederacy into fragments. A few words, sir, upon this interesting topic, and I have done.

Let us not be alarmed at any matter which, however apparently portentous, is exclusively to be controlled by the American people. They are a just and a wise people. They have entered into the national compact, and will maintain its obligations, in the strictness of the letter and the fullness of the spirit! They have long felt, and well know, not merely the benefits, but the positive political necessity of the Union.

There are some questions of public and social order, which the framers of the Constitution and the people of the respective States who ratified it, never intended to submit, and have not submitted, to the decision of a Congressional majority. Had they done so, the wholesome sectional equipoise and the essential sovereign equality of the members of the Confederacy would, at once, have been made to yield to the spirit and power of consolidation. Whatever a Congressional majority has a right under the provisions of the Constitution to legislate upon, that is a matter to which the American people have agreed to apply the principle and bear the consequences of consolidation:—what has been withheld from the ac-

tion of a Congressional majority,—that is beyond its reach, reserved either to the respective States or the people.

Sir, to my mind, the whole character of the Constitution must be changed before you can discern in it a communication, express or implied, of a power to Congress, to mould, modify, change, establish, or prohibit, actually or prospectively, the domestic relations of any portion of the American people. Such a power rests with the people themselves alone: it is the vitality and inalienable right of self-government.

I cannot yield my assent to the broad pretension that “the power to dispose of and make all *needful rules and regulations respecting the territory, or other property*, belonging to the United States”—a power given by the Constitution to Congress—involves any authority whatever to deprive the people of territories of every right, and subject them absolutely to the will of the majority of that body. This constitutional clause bears solely upon *property*, upon *naked* land. If the territory be tenanted by men, and especially if those men have already their civil institutions and their domestic relations, and, still more strongly, if that territory has come to us, covered with established societies, by conquest or purchase, I cannot for an instant indulge the extravagant construction of this article, which would empower Congress to extinguish the privilege of self-government, and to do precisely with the local communities what it pleased. At that rate, we might, one of these days, be shocked by an act of Congress formally *establishing* slavery among a people who disclaimed or excluded it;—for if this clause of the Constitution impart any power *to prohibit*, it equally imparts the power *to originate and legalize*.

But, sir, in an address on such an occasion as the present, I should trespass unpardonably, were I to enter more minutely into constitutional views connected with this subject. I know it to be a topic of extreme interest: I know the extra-constitutional and transcendental manner, in which it is treated to the North and East: and I know the heart-sickening solicitude and the impetuous vivacity with which its very mention is met by our Southern brethren. But, sir, I repeat, let us not be alarmed: let us keep our faith untarnished: let us firmly and fearlessly stand by the Constitution, in its pure purpose and its fundamental spirit: and the gloomy cloud, whence disaster has been predicted, will gradually dissipate, as mist touched by the morning sun.”

With these decided expositions of Mr. Dallas’ views, we close our hasty sketch of his Vice Presidential career. They show him still the same ardent patriot and determined statesman that he has proved himself in every former time of trial. He is indeed a *man incapable of change*. His opinions, his sympathies, his associations have not varied. Always *for the Democracy, with the Democracy, and of the Democracy*; no one ever suspected him of compromising a principle, or evading a responsibility, or conniving at an intrigue; no one of truckling to an opponent, or forgetting a friend. Proudly may Democratic Pennsylvania point to him, as her chivalrous representative, and the friends of the Constitution every where rally around him as its champion.

NOVEMBER, 1847.

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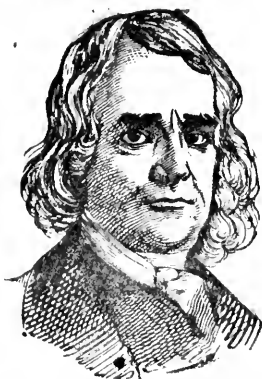
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LIFE
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VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.



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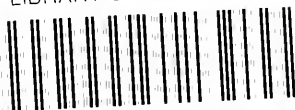
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